

BURNING MOUTH SYNDROME

Burning mouth syndrome (BMS) is a painful burning feeling in your mouth or on your tongue and lips. Although BMS can affect anyone, it's most common in middle-aged or older women.

This burning feeling can continue for months or years. For many people, the pain begins in late morning, is strongest in the evening, and often goes away at night. However, the symptoms are different for everyone. Some people feel constant pain, while for others, the pain comes and goes.

Other symptoms of BMS include:

- tingling or numbness on the tip of your tongue or in your mouth.
- bitter or metallic taste.
- dry or sore mouth.

CAUSES

The primary cause of BMS is hard to diagnose. Often it occurs with other medical and dental conditions, such as allergies or menopause. A single case of BMS may have multiple causes, including:

- hormonal changes.
- dry mouth caused by medication.
- dry mouth caused by another disorder such as diabetes or Sjögren's syndrome.
- nutritional deficiencies.
- fungal infection in your mouth (oral candidiasis).
- acid reflux.
- poorly fitting dentures.
- allergies to denture materials.
- nerve damage.
- anxiety and depression.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of BMS starts with a review of your medical history, a thorough oral exam, and a general physical. Tests may include:

- blood work to look for infection, nutritional deficiencies, and disorders such as diabetes or thyroid problems.
- oral swab to check for fungal infection.
- allergy testing (for denture materials, foods, or other substances that may be causing your symptoms).

TREATMENT

Depending on the cause of your BMS symptoms, possible treatments may include:

- adjustment to or replacement of irritating dentures.
- treating disorders such as diabetes, Sjögren's syndrome, or a thyroid problem.
- supplements for nutritional deficiencies.
- changing your medications (if possible).
- prescribing medications to:
 - relieve dry mouth.
 - treat fungal infection.
 - help control pain from nerve damage.
 - relieve anxiety and depression.

When no primary cause can be found, treatment is designed to relieve your symptoms. You can also try to:

- sip water frequently.
- suck on ice chips.
- avoid hot, spicy foods.
- avoid acidic foods, like citrus juices.
- chew sugarless gum.
- brush your teeth/dentures with baking soda and water.
- avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- avoid alcohol and tobacco products.

Talk with your dentist and doctor about other things you can do to help decrease the problem of burning mouth syndrome.

